

“Draft” Minutes of The Charltons Annual Parish Meeting

A meeting of the Parishioners

Held on Thursday 16th May 2024 at 7pm

At: The Reading Room, Hillway, Charlton Mackrell, TA11 6AN

There were seven members of the public present, seven members of the Parish Council (PC), Somerset Councillor Tim Kerley and the Clerk.

1. Welcome.

- a. The Chairman of the PC, Tamzin Elliott, opened the meeting by thanking those present.
- b. Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs D Elliott and A Ware. Somerset Councillor Stephen Page also tendered his apologies.

2. Minutes of The Charltons Annual Parish Meeting held on 16th May 2023 were received, approved as a true record and signed by Cllr Tamzin Elliott as Chairman of the meeting.

3. Report from the Chairman of the Parish Council: The Chairman, Tamzin Elliott presented her report, which can be found at attachment 1.

4. Report from Somerset Councillor Tim Kerley:

“It has been a difficult year, with finances being under severe strain. We narrowly avoided a S114 notice this year but the budget for next year is looking equally tight. We can have no doubt that Somerset Council will be transformed into a much smaller and leaner organisation over the next few years.

The difficult year was made worse by the tragic passing of Cllr Dean Ruddle, Dean's service to our community will be missed by all, regardless of political colour.

Some more positive news for the County is the new gigabyte factory being built at the Gravity site, which will bring in some good quality jobs and associated industries.

And for the Charltons, a new on demand bus service is being made available. Digital Slinky, is available for connections to Somerton, Langport and many of the surrounding villages. It is easily bookable and available to everybody.”

5. Reports from Local Groups and Organisations:

- a. The Charltons Parochial Church Council. The Clerk read out the report on behalf of Liz Bale, Churchwarden for the PCC:

“We are delighted to be able to report that our new priest Reverend Judith Swan will be joining the benefice towards the end of July. The service for her installation and

welcome will be held on Thursday 25th July in St Michael's in Somerton at 7 pm. All parishioners are welcome at this service.

Following lengthy consultations the benefice has been reconfigured and the Charltons are now in a benefice with Kingsdon, Somerton, Pitney and Long Sutton with Long Load. Reverend Swan will be responsible for this benefice and will be based in Somerton.

During the vacancy, we have endeavoured to maintain services as well as weddings and funerals. We have support from several volunteers caring for the churchyards, running coffee mornings, winter warmer lunches, Open the Book in both the Charltons and Somerton, pastoral care and prayer groups as well as dedicated bell ringers. However, we have concern that the "pool" of volunteers gets smaller each year – a problem which is not uncommon locally and nationally I suspect – for the present we are grateful for all the support we receive from many within the parish as without them it is highly likely both churches would have to close.

In reference to the church clocks – Kevin Moore is working on the arrangements to have the winding mechanism in Mackrell Church replaced at considerable cost. We are grateful for the Parish Councils support for the maintenance of both clocks. It is worth noting that when clocks were put on church towers most people did not have timepieces, hence their being on the highest buildings but the responsibility was on the local parish council.

b. Hallr Wood. The Clerk read out the report on behalf of Deb Millar:

"Hallr Wood has had another busy year serving the local community. We are now receiving NHS referrals for Green Prescriptions and have a thriving 'Men's Shed' on Wednesdays in term time.

We have provided sessions for many local schools including Evercreech, Lovington, Wells Blue School and St Dunstan's. Charlton Mackrell reception class and preschool are both regular users and have their own Squirrel Camp.

Last summer we provided a weekend camp for Young Carers and also Wells Explorer Scouts. too.

Holiday and weekend activity has included a Networking event for forest school practitioners in Somerset, two Ecotherapy for Mental Health professionals courses and a Nature module in level 4 Counselling course.

Wednesday Work Days and Care of the Woods: We open the woods on Wednesdays to general volunteers, some of the young adults with additional needs who we support and people referred through the NHS for mental health support.

Community Volunteer Days; We have run two Sunday volunteer days, one in November and one in March, mostly to support our D of E volunteers. We planted a substantial number of additional whips, silver birch, hazel and a few hornbeam.

Summer Holiday 2023 Activities: We delivered a day of mixed activities for children with additional needs and their carers/ families with financial support from the Somerset Inclusion Team. We had very good feedback.

Open Day Sunday 10th September: As usual, we had a wonderful day. The highlight was the giant puppet 'Sovereign Nature' brought by story tellers Jem and Sharon. Feedback was excellent and it was good to have a few local people who had never been before.

We had another lovely visit from the Enchanted Cinema this time over half term..

Glastonbury Festival Stewarding Team donation: Once again a stewarding team have chosen to support our work at Hallr Wood. Many thanks to them for this support for the Wild Music Project.

Finances: For many years now, we have had regular schools and clients who pay for our educational services, so we have become financially self reliant.

It is always our policy to be non profit making and we provide our services at cost. We also ensure that no one is turned away because of low income. Independent users of the wood, including the Charlton's Preschool and School, make nominal donations which help us buy materials and resources and cover costs of maintenance etc. Deb Millar Email: deb@wilderwoods.org"

c. Charltons Youth Club. Kate O'Boyle, volunteer at the CYC, presented her report: "The Youth club continues to be very well-received by our young villagers and we have approx. 12-15 young people attending our weekly term-time sessions at the Community Centre and overall approx. 30 members.

The Youth Club continues to play an important role in helping young people in our village feel connected to each other and their community as well as providing valuable opportunities for self-development and insight, and helping to entertain and provide some enjoyment for our younger villagers outside of the school and home setting.

The club continues to employ 2 youth workers from the Community Youth Project to run the weekly sessions, supported by a small group of volunteers. Thanks to the generosity of the community centre committee who do not charge us to use the hall and field, our main fixed costs are the employment of the 2 youth workers which totals approx. £6,500 per year. As we no longer receive any funding from the county council for youth provision we rely entirely on grants and fundraising to raise this money to keep the club afloat. Currently we have enough money to last for another 2 years and are currently looking for funding opportunities to help secure the club beyond 2026.

I'd like to thank the Parish Council for their annual grant. We have also secured a regular yearly income from Glastonbury Festival of £1500 by running an off-site stewarding group. Further good news is that we have recently been awarded a £6000 grant from Children in Need which will help secure the club for another year and affords us the privileged of using the "Sponsored by CIN" Logo for the duration of the grant period.

But we must not sit back on our laurels as this money will quickly get depleted by the annual costs to the run the club and as such our fund-raising efforts continue at pace. The Charlton's Pop-up ballroom team have returned for a third time and are busy planning a fund-raising Sustain-a-ball for Sept 2024 where we hope to raise up to £5000 for both Youth club and the "Raise the Roof" campaign for the community hall. Without the community hall the youth club will not have a home, so it is import we also help the efforts of the CIO to raise funds for the hall renovations."

d. The Giraffe House Pickleball Club. The Clerk read out the report on behalf of Janine Denison, Chair of the GHPC:

"The Giraffe House Pickleball Club continues to be a popular and well attended group. Members play at the Charlton Adam Community Hall on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursdays of each week. As the club has grown in popularity we have had to look elsewhere so as to be able to accommodate our growing numbers. We now use Ansford school sports hall on a Sunday morning and Monday evening.

Unsurprisingly pickleball is the one of the fastest growing activities in the country. Not only does it offer an activity that will enhance physical fitness and mobility, it provides a lively social network which and in turn benefits mental health. It also offers a wide variety of opportunities. There are Pickleball Festivals held around the country as well as more competitive competitions. The beauty of this game is that players can compete with others in their age group and against those of similar ability worked on a system of self assessment. Members of our club have travelled far and wide to participate in such events as well as ones closer to home. It is an activity that can be enjoyed by everyone...all ages and all abilities, which is reflected in the Giraffe House

membership that spans an age group from some in their 30's up to other regular players in their LATE eighties!!

It is an exceptionally friendly and socially active club with regular extras being offered; a summer BBQ at the Community field, a Christmas get together at a local hostelry and there are usually appropriate home baked goodies available on high days and holidays like Valentines and Easter.

Our club now boasts 97 members. This is an impressive number for a club that started in 2018 with just 12 members. We are very proud of this achievement and that we are providing an activity that offers enjoyment to so many in our community

New members are always welcome (adults only at this stage) and will receive a warm, friendly reception and undergo a comprehensive induction process."

e. The Charltons Memorial Community Trust (CIO). Rick Harrison, Chairman of the CMCT presented his report:

"It has been a very busy year at The Charltons Community Hall and Memorial Playing Field.

This year we have moved from being an outdated Trust into being a Community Incorporated Trust (CIO). What does this mean to the village? By becoming a CIO we are now seen as being a modern well organised Charitable Trust which means a huge amount to grant providers such as The National Lottery. ACRE are very keen to see all similar trusts to become CIOs. So in short it will mean increased credibility and up to date with the strict requirements of the Charity Commission.

We have received a generous grant from the PC towards our improvement programme however we will need to fundraise for the grass cutting which is normally paid from the Parish Councils grant.

We have recruited three new Trustees Jules Ford, Alex Causer and Damien Roberts. The most important and pressing issue is the need for major refurbishment and replacement of the roof. This is going to be a major project and is keeping the trustees busy. We have a set of plans which are here today if you would like to see them, they have been available at many events as part of our continuing public consultation. We are currently awaiting planning permission which we hope to receive soon. Due to the cost of completing the whole plan in one hit we are taking a phased approach, being:

Phase 1 – Replace the existing roof with a modern fully insulated one.

Phase 2 – Modernise the changing rooms and improve the heating system.

Phase 3 – Create a Village Cafe and seating area within the entrance hall and current storeroom.

We are currently fundraising for these Phases and look to the village to support the local events including music and of course the upcoming Village Day (6 July)

The good news is that this has been a year of successful events and initiatives which has helped.

Lydford FC are now using the facility as their home ground. During the summer they gave the changing rooms a really good clean-out including a fresh coat of paint. At the beginning of each match day the players shirts are proudly set out on a hanger on each peg. The team can be seen engaged in an organised warm up session well before the start of the match. They clearly take a great pride in their club, take their playing seriously and treat the grounds, the hall and the spectators with great respect. After the home games the hall committee provide burgers, pies & snacks with alcoholic beverages for sale. This has been very warmly welcomed by the players & supporters and serves as an excellent fund raising opportunity for the hall.

We have also successfully gained a full license to sell alcohol.

We will be holding a regular Village Cafe on the first Saturday of each month, starting in July (as the first Saturday in July is our Village Day)

There has been a variety of events held throughout the year. There was the annual village day last July which raised around £2000.00 and was very much enjoyed and well supported by villagers.

The dark, miserable, wet winter evenings of November & December when you don't expect to be able to get people out to events two events we organised were really well supported. In November an excellent Blues band, The Producers, played in November at the community hall to a sell out crowd and received three encores!! We thought we would never get home!! Then in Christmas week we used the Reading Room to host a curry evening with story telling. Once again a sell out! What an amazing evening this was. Dave Trevis of Charlton Mackrell told the story of Gawain and The Green Knight and he was spectacular. This was a very special evening and one we hope will be repeated this coming Christmas. In March this year we were fortunate to have Jinder playing at the hall. Jinder is an acoustic guitarist whose had one of his songs featured in the award winning film A Fisherman's Friend. We were very privileged to have the opportunity of seeing live such an eminent musician.

In May we have a brilliant band The Moscow Drug Club playing at the hall, in June we have two events The Military Wives choir and a Blues Band, Billy Boy MisKimmin & Mercy Lounge. Plus Project Charltons are holding a Party in the Park to celebrate the completion of their amazing project.

In addition to these music events held throughout the year for the entertainment of local residents, the hall is also used for Pickleball three days of the week, Badminton one evening a week and the Youth Club are based here and meet weekly in term time. It is frequently hired out for parties, other local societies use it for their functions and it is also used for private dance lessons.

This illustrates that the Charltons Community Hall is the hub of the community and an integral resource. It is therefore essential that we continue to work hard to achieve a mighty sum of tens of thousands of pounds to refurbish it and provide a much improved facility for the community.

With this in mind we are recommencing the Village Lottery which will be on line and full details will soon be announced."

f. Archdeacon Brymer Trust. Cllr Adams reported on the history of the Trust. Archdeacon William Brymer, a former vicar of Charlton Mackrell church, and founder of Charlton Mackrell school in 1853, set up a foundation for the welfare, education and advancement of pupils at the school. The Trustees set up a fund to provide music bursaries for pupils to support the teaching of music in the school. Funds continue to be raised through investments, donations, church concerts and events such as charity sponsored walks.

g. The Charltons Tennis Club. Dee Powell presented her report:

"The tennis court continues to be a valuable resource in the village. It is used throughout the year including all the winter months with only rain, snow and ice stopping play.

We have been very fortunate this year to be awarded a donation from The Big Breakfast charity in Keinton Mandeville and have been able to purchase a new net.

We have suffered with weeds this year but this issue was addressed by a relation of a one of our members which we are very grateful for.

The court will require a resurface within the next few years so we will be looking at how to raise funds to achieve this."

h. Charltons Horticultural Society. Dee Powell presented her report as secretary:

"This has been a busy and productive year with some exciting events.

Following the success of the presentation by Chris Beardshaw in 2022 when all 100 seats in the community hall were sold with guests travelling long distances on a dark wet November evening to attend we were confident in the knowledge that there was plenty of interest out there for participating in horticultural events. Consequently we offered to host the very popular BBC Radio 4's Gardeners Question Time! Our invitation was accepted and in August the GQT panel of experts arrived at the hall with a recording team and Peter Gibbs as the Chairman/Presenter.

As this was a high profile event there was of course a considerable amount of work to do behind the scenes. As always, there were plenty of volunteers from the community who helped out and of course the trustees of the community hall worked tirelessly to ensure everything went smoothly. The CHS extends their thanks to all those who worked so hard. These events could not happen without the kindness of people giving up their time.

GQT proved to be a huge success and we felt very honoured to be a part of the longest running radio programme in the world. We sold 100 tickets making it a full house again, and the BBC recorded two programmes that both went out during September. It was a wonderful evening. Very interesting and certainly put The Charltons on "The Map!" On the strength of its success we have booked the popular, entertaining and witty Bob Flowerdew to give a talk and presentation on September 20th this year at the Community Hall.

The CHS organises various activities throughout the year providing a warm and welcoming social calendar for its members in addition to opportunities to extend their knowledge of horticulture.

This year we have had a very interesting talk on composting and began 2024 with a quiz. Later we hold the annual plant sale and coffee morning which always proves to be very popular as a real bargain can be had thanks to the hard work and expertise of our committee Paul Ross and Vic & Gill Eppy!

In the summer months there will be a subsidised coach trip to the American Museum & Gardens in Bath, another one to Weymouth as well as a club "picnic in the park", a BBQ and of course a Christmas Dinner occasion.

A further benefit of being a member of the CHS is the discounts members can receive from various local nurseries and garden centres."

i. Project Charltons. Dee Powell presented her report:

In January 2019 a group of five women met with a vision to create an outside activity area that met the needs of everyone in the community from 0-100yrs+.

We decided on our name "Project Charltons", agreed on a mission statement "Promoting Health and Wellbeing In An Environmentally Friendly Way" and set about creating a logo.

We firstly approached the PC and asked for their permission to fund raise on their behalf. We were given not only their blessing but a generous grant of £10,000 which gave us a sound starting block on which to build. Our target was £100,000. Thank you PC.

We then began our fund raising in earnest. Unbeknown to us of course, a global pandemic was just around the corner which somewhat hampered our activities but by no means dissuaded us.

Three years later in March 2021 we had completed our first phase. Swings, slides, climbing frames, roundabout and balance trail was installed. This by very good fortune coincided with a relaxing of covid lockdown. Families were allowed to visit outside areas like parks and playing areas once again.

We also installed (compliments of Dawn Richards) picnic tables, some with activity tops and not to forget our four legged friends who are always present in the park, with

a grant from Wessex Water we were able to install a fresh water dispenser to not only refill the bottles of the energetic children but also to serve the thirsty dogs!

We had to work in three phases because the road was not always smooth! We were not awarded the amount we had hoped for in one of our bids, the monies promised us from the new housing in Charlton Adam never materialised and of course Covid prevented us from fund raising for a year.

In this first phase we hit another huge hurdle which we can laugh about now but the outcome could have been very different. As it happened, thanks to the kindness of employees at The Quarry we sailed over the hurdle!

The climbing frame was being delivered from Europe. We were not anticipating a 50' articulated lorry!! Clearly this would not be able to access the lanes or low bridges to reach our Community Park. So we arranged delivery at The Quarry!!! This was fine. What we had not foreseen was the enormity of each piece. So we stood helpless with a very bewildered non English speaking Eastern European driver. Andrea of course was on hand with her picnic basket to offer him refreshment but we had no way of getting the equipment off the lorry never mind transporting it to the park!!!

This was a very nervous Saturday morning for us! We had absolutely no idea what we were to do. We brought in the cavalry (our husbands). We managed at least to remove the pieces from the lorry and he was able to leave. But we still had two or three pallets that were far too heavy to lift and far too big to get into any form of normal transport.

Fortunately, the quarry staff came to our rescue with their fork lift trucks and flat-bed lorry and delivered the goods to the Community park. What a relief! Thank you Morris's Quarry. We will be eternally grateful!

The second phase to be completed was the Sensory Garden. We were humbled and delighted when a resident made a very generous donation toward this. We took professional advice on the design and the garden was ready in the autumn of 2021. This of course is an ongoing development which we hope will improve year on year. It does require near constant attention and we are very thankful to the working party that help maintain it! Three years on I think you will agree it looks quite splendid.

During this period we invited members of the community to purchase a bench in memory of ones they have loved. We were delighted that this was met with a positive response and we installed three. In addition, the village organised a collection to fund a memorial bench for our much loved, long standing and greatly missed Postmaster, John Bowman. This is accompanied by a plum tree so the residents can sit on John's bench and enjoy a sweet snack whilst reflecting on the happy times spent with John! Shortly afterwards in July 2022 came Stage three in the form of a spectacular zip-wire. This is for the older children but I have seen many an adult flying through the air with unparalleled delight!

Finally in 2024 we managed to raise enough funds to provide a basketball playing area and some seating to go in the area where the old swings and the strength bars remain providing a space for the young people in the community.

Mission accomplished!

Along the way we believe we brought fun, social and cultural enrichment to the village. Our fund raising events provided considerable entertainment for children, young people, families and adults. We have had fun runs, sponsored swims, treasure hunts, Easter egg hunts, pop-up ice cream cafes even a pop-up planetarium. There have been walking table top sales, a formal dress Murder Mystery Evening, poetry readings with a celebrity and the Christmas of 2020 mid lockdown when the children had not been in school or having the normal festivities we were able to become Santa and drive him in his sleigh around the village!

We have had fun on this journey and extend our thanks to not just our sponsors but to the community who have shown us such tremendous support and encouragement. In total we exceeded our target and raised in excess of £140,000.00
We will be celebrating the completion of Project Charltons on June 8th with a Party in the Park with our MP Sarah Dyke coming to declare it "OPEN"
Nina, Andrea, Dawn, Jody & Dee – "The Team"

6. Open Public Parish Forum

- a. Lytes Cary 30mph Speed Restriction. Residents commented on the speed of traffic that continued to speed through Lytes Cary. Cllr Crawley advised that he had discussed this issue with the police who had informed him that the new speed restriction would require six months to bed in before the police speed enforcement unit would attend. Cllr Crawley agreed to follow this up.
- b. Potholes. Following questions from residents regarding the state of some of the County's roads, Cllr Kerley reported that anyone can report faults on highways or rights of way via the 'Fix My Street' App in any part of the country. The Council would be legally obliged to reply to any report.

There being no further representation, the meeting closed at 8.15pm and was followed by the Annual Parish Council meeting.

Signed: Dated:Chairman